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ABSTRACT

Child care is a prevalent service need among parents of young children and a major employment option for women. Low compensation for child care teachers/providers contributes to the cycle of poverty because poor women have little access to training, education, and other avenues of career advancement. Mandatory employment for welfare recipients will create a demand for child care services which can be met by a portion of the women who must find employment. However, without a guarantee of adequate training, support, and compensation, the quality of the new child care services will be inadequate. The U.S. Army Child Development Services and Head Start are cited as examples of sectors of the field which offer adequate compensation and stability. A national survey has identified a variety of program options to increase low-income women's access to higher paying child care jobs. This study consulted with 100 individuals and organizations to target promising initiatives, and then conducted 16 interviews with program directors and advisors. Five programs are profiled in this report: (1) Child Care Careers Program in Boston, Massachusetts; (2) Minnesota Child Care Apprentice/Mentor Program in Minneapolis; (3) TEACH Early Childhood Project in North Carolina; (4) Chicago Commons in Chicago, Illinois; and (5) Childspace Management Group, Inc., in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Common obstacles to creating decent paying child care jobs and standards for success for effective training and employment in child care jobs are discussed. (KDFB)

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Investing in Child Care Jobs in Low-Income Communities

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

A Special Report from the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force

This publication, and NCECW's nationwide survey of community initiatives to invest in child care jobs, were made possible by the generous support of the Ford Foundation. A full report will be released in the winter of 1996.

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In low-income communities across the United States, child care is not only a prevalent service need among parents of young children, but a major employment option for women. The dilemmas of inconsistent child care quality, and of generally very low compensation for child care teachers and providers, however, are also two of the major factors which make the cycle of poverty so persistent in poor communities.

Child care is a relatively very easy field of employment for anyone to enter. But because of relatively poor access to training, education and other avenues of career advancement, poor and minority women tend to remain disproportionately at the entry-level, lowest-paid child care jobs in their communities -- even though better-paying child care jobs may well be located in low-income areas, because of the presence of publicly-subsidized programs. Further, it is precisely these better-paying positions that are least likely to "turn over" and become available to a newly-trained job seeker.

How, then, can low-income women's access to higher-paying child care jobs be increased? A recent national survey by the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force (NCECW) has identified a variety of promising program options, but the recently-passed federal welfare reform legislation also reveals a startling trend toward punitive measures and regulatory short-cuts. We are entering a time of danger -- and opportunity -- as programs to employ poor women in child care are being developed from a very broad range of motives and in a highly uncertain political climate.

Mandatory employment for welfare recipients -- for better or worse -- has clearly become the thrust of welfare reform at the federal and state levels, a policy likely to create a virtually overnight demand for jobs and child care services for millions of families removed from the welfare rolls. As policy makers and program designers scramble to develop work options for welfare recipients, child care employment has appeared high on the list of possibilities. The escalating demand for child care services as welfare recipients enter the work force, it is argued, could be met by a portion of these same women who must now find employment.

The idea seems like a perfect fit: building the child care supply for children in poverty while creating a job opportunity for their parents. But child care jobs can by no means be viewed as a simple or low-cost solution to the welfare-to-work dilemma. With 70 percent of the child care work force earning poverty-level wages, a job in child care hardly guarantees a welfare recipient a clear path to self-sufficiency.[1] Further, without a guarantee of adequate training, support and compensation for newly recruited caregivers -- an effort that unavoidably carries significant costs -- the supply of new child care services generated under welfare reform could well be very poor in quality.

Nowhere are the dangers of the new "get tough" approach to welfare reform clearer than in the "Wisconsin Works," or W-2, program set forth by state Governor Tommy Thompson. While W-2 will roughly triple what the state spends on child care for low-income families, it has been estimated by the Wisconsin Women's Network

[1] When California implemented its welfare-to-work program, GAIN, in 1985, several counties excluded child care as a possible job option. Because of low compensation in the field, child care work was viewed by GAIN administrators as an undesirable route toward family self-sufficiency.

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Child Care Task Force that this 300 percent increase in funds will somehow have to serve a *1700 percent* rise in the caseload. As currently framed, W-2 will force women into the work force when their babies are 12 weeks old, even though decent infant care is already very hard to find or to afford. At the same time, W-2 will create a new category of "provisionally certified" child care, through which home-based providers can care for up to three children without any required training, and be reimbursed at less than the state's usual market rate -- well below the minimum wage, even if they care for the maximum number of children allowed. (The sub-minimum wage payment provision has been suspended until the end of 1996 to enable the state to study its possible consequences.) By setting up a parallel system of all-but-unregulated care provided by low-income women, W-2 promises to undercut the state's system of licensed center- and home-based programs, many of which could have to close. Reports of imminent center closures in Madison and other cities have already surfaced.

Nationwide, ironically, many child care workers are likely candidates themselves for publicly-supported welfare and health care benefits. Child care center teaching staff earned on average $6.80 per hour or $11,900 annually in 1993-1994[2], and only a small percentage received the health and child care benefits that low-income single heads of household need to sustain themselves on such earnings. In Wisconsin, licensed or regulated family child care providers earned an average of $8,344 after expenses in 1994, but certified providers, subject to fewer regulations -- the group into which most women offering child care under welfare reform are likely to fall-- earned only $5,132 after expenses.[3] Further, to earn even this modest level of income, providers generally need to maintain high enrollments, and often make costly health and safety renovations to adapt their homes for group child care.

To date, serious investments in child care employment have most often been motivated by a desire to improve the quality of services for children, while only secondarily providing better opportunities for advancement for low-income teachers and providers. In reality, these two goals should be closely linked, since high turnover and low compensation among caregivers have been shown to have direct and harmful effects on the quality of care that children receive, and on children's ability to socialize and learn. Research has also shown that poor children are more vulnerable than others to low-quality child care, and that they benefit more than others from better-quality care.[4]

Despite the obstacles, there is evidence that in certain circumstances -- particularly in well-subsidized sectors of the field -- child care is a job that can offer decent compensation, stability and a future to people in low-income communities. And there is a growing awareness among policy makers and program planners that in order to improve child care quality, child care jobs must be improved as well.

U.S. Army Child Development Services, for example, initiated a Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan in 1990, a training system linked to salary upgrades for child care staff at all Army installations. This initiative has resulted in dramatically reduced turnover among teachers and providers, a better-trained work force, and more consistent program quality. In addition, the federal Head Start program, recognizing the role that compensation and training play in program quality, has been able to implement salary enhancements and expanded training provisions for all employees after the two most recent congressional re-authorizations of program funding.

Head Start employs many former welfare recipients, especially parents whose children have attended the program, and has therefore served an important community development function in low-income areas over its 30-year history. Working in Head Start has been a route away from poverty for many people, especially for those who have moved into administrative jobs or used Head Start as a stepping stone to other employment. But for those who have remained in Head Start teaching jobs, the potential for escaping poverty-level compensation still remains limited. In 1994, for example, after two years of salary improvements, entry-level teacher aides earned only $9,188 per year on average, and those who had been on the job from six to ten years earned only slightly

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[2] The most recent year for which national data is available (Whitebook et al., 1993; Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). Data from local communities in 1995 and 1996, collected by NCECW, show no appreciable trends toward higher earnings in child care.

[3] Burton et al., 1995. In fact, W-2 participants, as *provisionally* certified providers working with no required experience or training, could earn even less than certified providers. Unpublished national data collected by Kathy Modigliani of Wheelock College, Boston, also confirm this pattern of very low incomes in family child care.

[4] Whitebook et al., 1989 and 1993; Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995.

more than $11,000 per year (Whitebook, 1995).

Mindful of the difficulties of investing in good child care jobs, NCECW set out to document programs and strategies with the potential to create good jobs in low-income communities and build high-quality services for children. We began by consulting with nearly 100 individuals and organizations in order to target the most promising initiatives, and then conducted sixteen in-depth interviews with program directors, advisors and consultants in 1995 and early 1996. Respondents included representatives of community development corporations, micro- and peer-loan funds, facility funds, worker-owned cooperatives, foundations, and child care training and job placement programs. In the process, our survey uncovered some encouraging program models as well as a number of common challenges and barriers.

Our motivation was to provide factual information to advocates and policy makers who are confronting a fast-changing child care policy environment. Recent Congressional actions to reorganize and limit federal funding for child care, and to increase the demand for child care services and jobs through welfare reform, appear to offer little hope for improving either child care employment or services. The shifting landscape of funding and regulation, however, does provide an opportunity for innovation at the local and state levels. The success and promise of the following five programs, we hope, can offer significant guidance to the field in expanding the true potential of child care as a livable, sustaining, professional job for people of all communities.

Five Profiles

Of these five programs, the first three are training-based efforts to help people enter the field and progress up a career ladder, while the last two are models of improving jobs for experienced child care teachers who are already in the work place. These two program types serve as a reminder that one cannot focus exclusively on bringing more low-income women into the field, but must also provide advancement opportunities for the current child care work force, many of whom continue to live at or near the poverty level. We have also included cost data for programs to emphasize that despite an overwhelming policy trend toward reducing costs and slashing budgets, it remains true that effective programs to reduce poverty cost money.

The Child Care Careers Program
Boston, Massachusetts

The Child Care Careers Program (CCCP), part of Wheelock College's Center for Career Development, offers low-income women from Boston and Cambridge, Mass., a nine-month pre-service training program in early childhood education. Wheelock College awards 15 college credits to the trainee for her work and a certificate which indicates that the graduate meets the Massachusetts Office for Children requirements for child care teacher certification. The CCCP enjoyed a 100-percent placement rate in 1995, and the average salary earned by placed graduates is between $8.00 and $10.00 an hour plus benefits.[5]

The CCCP is funded through the Economic Development Industrial Corporation (EDIC) and the Massachusetts Department of Education, and financial aid to students comes in the form of Pell Grants. Wheelock College provides in-kind institutional support but no direct funding to the program. The annual cost per student of the program is approximately $5,300.00 -- or $6,000.00, including the in-kind contribution of Wheelock staff.

The majority of CCCP students are Latina or African-American women between 22 and 35 years of age. Most are also parents of young children, and are eligible through CCCP for child care vouchers for use while they are in school. Of the 25 students the program accepts each year, 80 percent of the spaces are reserved for welfare recipients.

Recruitment for the program is year-long through postings with the Employment Services Program/Department of Transitional Assistance area offices, unemployment offices, Head Start Day Care Programs, child care centers and multi-service agencies, as well as through word of mouth. Requests for enrollment have also increased each year; on average, the program must now turn away four applicants for every one it accepts.

Such a high demand allows the program to be selective: students are highly motivated to become child care teachers and to become students in early care and education.

At the completion of their training, many students find jobs at their student internship sites. Wheelock staff put a great deal of effort into preparing students to find jobs, and have an ongoing commitment to graduates' continuing education and

[5] Starting teaching assistant wages in Boston were $6.10 per hour in 1992, and have not increased significantly since.

professional training. Wheelock also offers spaces to CCCP graduates at no cost to attend courses in its Part Time Bachelor's Program. Forty-four percent of the graduates have enrolled, and successful completion makes them eligible for Lead Teacher Certification. Students wishing to continue their education are counseled and encouraged to do so.

Wheelock staff also assist students in job search activities that include writing cover letters and resumes, conducting mock interviews, role playing in job searches, obtaining referrals to job openings, writing references, and arranging transportation to interviews.

Successful placements are largely due to the fact that CCCP is training workers who come from and live in the communities where they are seeking to work. Moreover, students are counseled and trained to select jobs that provide the best compensation and benefits package -- not to take the first job offered, but the job that will best meet their needs.

Overall success of the program can be attributed to several factors in combination:

- the reputation of Wheelock College and the dedication of its staff;
- a rigorous student selection process;
- training that brings participants up to a significantly higher professional level, allowing them to command better compensation in the job market;
- strong state licensing requirements, which signal the state's commitment to investing in quality child care; and
- two decades of dedicated community advocacy in support of better child care and better teacher/provider compensation.

The program's obstacles have stemmed largely from the current instability of MassJOBS and Pell Grant funding. New funding received since the time of NCECW's interview, however, will now enable the program to expand.

The Minnesota Child Care Apprentice/Mentor Program

Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Minnesota Child Care Apprentice/Mentor Program (MCCAMP) is a pilot program combining training, support services, wage subsidies and job placement to assist low-income women in finding decent-paying child care jobs.

Apprentices work one-on-one with mentors at a child care center for two years, receive a 90 percent tuition reimbursement for 30 college credits toward a certificate in early childhood education, and become qualified as head teachers under Minnesota licensing guidelines. The college credits articulate with two-year community college degree programs and the four-year community psychology degree available from Minnesota State University. Participating centers are required to meet certain wage goals, and apprentices have averaged about $2,000 in wage increases over the two years. Although not required to do so, the program has been able to secure employment for all the apprentices. The program is currently being replicated in Rochester, Minnesota.

MCCAMP is funded by Hennepin County discretionary funds targeted by the County Commissioners to help low-income residents gain better-paying employment. These county funds, drawn from residential property taxes, pay for participants' college tuition, evening child care, transportation, and wage upgrades.

The two-year cost to MCCAMP for each apprentice/mentor team is $9,651.00. The total cost, however, is $11,580.00, which includes $180.00 paid by apprentices (10 percent of tuition and books), $70.00 paid by mentors (30 percent of tuition and 100 percent of books), and $1,679.00 paid by center sponsors (average 10 percent of tuition and books, and 75 percent of the apprentice's wage upgrade).

The program's first group of apprentices two years ago consisted of nine women and three men; two were welfare recipients who had not yet worked in child care, and ten were untrained entry-level child care workers who were earning very low wages. The apprentices were more ethnically and racially diverse than their mentors, largely because fewer people of color have had access to the education and training necessary to meet Minnesota's licensing qualifications for teachers. The MCCAMP staff, which had considerable experience in anti-bias and diversity work, paid particular attention to bridging cultural gaps among apprentices, mentors and other center staff.

In addition to the training and placement services that assure trainees of decent-paying child care work at the completion of their apprenticeship, trainees receive an array of supports throughout the program. All apprentices are reimbursed for 80 percent of book costs and 100 percent of evening child care and transportation costs; they also

receive wage upgrades at six-month intervals to supplement the base wage they earn from their centers.

Welfare recipients enrolled in the program receive the additional support of Transitional Child Care benefits as well as their welfare grant. Initially their wages are deducted from the welfare grant until they make enough to leave the welfare system. Child care center directors, who might be reluctant to take a chance on an inexperienced employee, have the incentive of needing to make only a small financial investment in wages at first, as the program pays $2.50 of the apprentice's base wage plus 100 percent of the wage upgrades every six months. At the end of their two-year training, all apprentices earn a minimum of $8.00 per hour from their centers, according to the contractual agreement.
MCCAMP also requires that apprentices receive all benefits offered to other employees. In cases where health benefits are not offered, low-income workers in Minnesota have the option of purchasing a state-funded health plan with costs based on income, family size and number of people covered. This statewide health plan allows apprentices not eligible for Medicaid to receive low-cost health insurance.

Most of the center directors involved in the program have been happy to hire an apprentice, viewing the initial two-year commitment as a win-win proposition in an occupation characterized by high turnover and poor opportunities for training. At the end of the first two-year cycle of the MCCAMP, ten of the apprentices have been placed permanently in the centers where they began their training, and two have taken positions in other centers. The MCCAMP director reports that the limited pool of programs who can afford to pay a staff member $8.00 at the completion of training is the main limitation on the program's growth.

The TEACH Early Childhood Project
North Carolina

The TEACH Early Childhood Project coordinates a variety of educational scholarship opportunities under one umbrella for people working in regulated child care centers and homes in North Carolina. Participants receive scholarships to offset the cost of earning a North Carolina Child Care Credential or Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, completing course work toward an A.A. or B.A. degree in early childhood education, or becoming an Early Childhood Model/Mentor Teacher. Any teacher, director or family child care provider in a regulated child care setting is eligible to apply for a scholarship. Child care center employees must be sponsored by their center. When center employees reach their educational goal, they receive either a salary increase of three to five percent or a one-time bonus. Family child care providers always receive the bonus because they are self-employed. TEACH participants receive a salary increase or bonus for each contract period that they are in the program, so that each additional educational attainment is rewarded with additional compensation.

TEACH participants' income at the beginning of the program is roughly equivalent to that of other North Carolina child care teachers, one-third of whom live at or below the poverty level. If anything, their income may be lower than average, since TEACH attracts a greater percentage of child care workers with minimal college experience. TEACH program staff have built relationships with community colleges across the state, even in less populated rural communities, in order to encourage broad access to any child care worker who wants to participate.

The average scholarship cost for TEACH varies greatly among different programs. Scholarships always cover part of the cost of tuition and books, as well as a per-quarter travel stipend. In some programs, teachers receive paid release time from their center to study, attend class or meet personal needs. TEACH reimburses the center or family child care provider for one-half of the cost of the release time. TEACH Early Childhood Project staff also provide counseling and administrative support for the program.

The funding for TEACH programs comes from a variety of sources, including the North Carolina Division of Child Care Development, which administers federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds for the state, the North Carolina General Assembly, corporate contributions, and foundation support. In 1995, 1,805 North Carolina child care workers received a TEACH Early Childhood Project scholarship. The average cost per participant is $520.00 per year.

TEACH staff have tracked scholarship recipients for up to five years. Teachers and providers who aim to complete an A.A. or B.A. can easily take five years or longer because most work part-time. About 69.5 percent of all TEACH participants currently are pursuing a state Child Care Credential, 26.3 percent an Early Childhood

Associate Degree, and 0.8 percent a B.A. degree. The remaining 3.4 percent are pursuing a CDA credential or taking part in the Early Childhood Model/Mentor Teacher Program. TEACH staff have found that at the five-year mark, child care teachers still in the TEACH program earned 30 percent more than when they began -- a greater increase than what the program requires of centers.

Recognizing the unique issues in easing the transition from welfare to work, TEACH is now planning a demonstration project, in collaboration with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, that would meet low-income women's needs for health care benefits and child care. Welfare recipients who become TEACH apprentices will work in centers as substitutes for other TEACH participants during their paid release time. It is proposed that welfare recipients who will be attending school part-time will continue to receive child care and health benefits, their welfare grant, and TEACH bonuses when earned.

TEACH has established a program that is clearly accessible to low-income people; once welfare recipients' welfare-related benefits expire, however, it is unlikely that child care jobs, even with the TEACH salary increase, can sustain a single head of household with dependents. The average hourly wage for an assistant in North Carolina in 1993 was $5.03, and $5.61 for a teacher; wage increases of 30 percent would elevate these salaries to $6.53 or $7.29. The general lack of fully-paid health benefits for child care staff in North Carolina only aggravates the challenge of self-sufficiency. TEACH is clearly improving the education and skills of a wide span of child care workers in North Carolina, and rewarding the accomplishments of center staff and providers with better compensation. Without comprehensive benefits, however, even better-educated low-income women may not be able to sustain their families by working in child care.

Chicago Commons
Chicago, Illinois

Chicago Commons is a community development corporation serving low-income residents of the Chicago area. Its Child Development Program currently has seven sites serving 970 children of low-income families, ranging in age from birth to 12 years old. Services offered include Head Start, state Pre-Kindergarten, child care, and family child care offered through a Day Care Home Network. Each site offers an array of early childhood services; the largest, for example, has two Head Start classrooms and 11 child care classrooms serving children from infancy through school age.

The Child Development Program receives financial support from the Illinois Department of Human Services, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the State Board of Education, federal Title XX funds, and private donors. Private donations largely support the Day Care Home Network, and come from such sources as local foundations and Felpro, a locally-based manufacturing company.

Chicago Commons has demonstrated a commitment to early childhood development, and views it as equally important to the other services it offers the community. Five years ago, its Board of Directors appointed a committee to examine pay differentials among the workers providing early care and education services. Their first priority was to eliminate the approximately $5,000 gap between the annual salaries of Head Start teachers and child care teachers employed by Chicago Commons, and they set aside roughly $30,000 per year of agency funds for salary enhancements for child care teachers. Child care head teachers and Head Start teachers are now on the same pay scale, making an average of $21,000 per year and receiving full individual health coverage. The next goal of Chicago Commons is to narrow the pay differentials between these teachers and others in their programs, including pre-kindergarten head teachers who earn an average of $29,000 per year.

Chicago Commons has a hard-working development team which raises funds each year to support the equitable new salary schedule, but the agency remains at risk of losing existing services and salary enhancements because of pending cuts in public and United Way funding. If funding is substantially cut, Chicago Commons could face the dilemma, all too familiar in publicly-funded nonprofit programs, of whether to cut services or salaries.

Childspace Management Group, Inc.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Childspace Management Group, Inc. is a worker-owned cooperative whose member/owners staff two child care centers in economically and ethnically diverse neighborhoods of Philadelphia. Staff at both of the Childspace Day Care Centers are predominantly women from low-income communities, serving an economically diverse group of children. The worker cooperative was started in 1988 to create opportunities and incentives for

child care workers to take responsibility for delivering high-quality services for children. Childspace is committed to worker empowerment through training, and to participation in work-group and corporate decision-making in an employee-centered culture. Childspace member/owners collectively make management-level decisions on budgets, center policies related to salary scales and benefits, and long-range planning. All Childspace staff, whether cooperative members or not, earn above-average benefits. (Not all staff opt to take on the decision-making responsibility of being a member of the worker cooperative.)

An entry-level assistant teacher at Childspace starts at a minimum of $6.00 per hour, and a head teacher starts at a minimum of $17,000 annually (about $8.17 per hour).[6] These fairly typical child care teaching salaries, however, are supplemented with a generous benefits package: full-time staff (working 30 or more hours per week) receive full family health coverage if needed and full-time child care for one child. Part-time staff (employed 15 to 29 hours) receive full individual health coverage, a benefit virtually unheard-of for part-time workers in any profession.

As the cost of purchasing benefits increased for Childspace in 1992, a ten-percent staff co-payment was introduced by cooperative members. This difficult decision was viewed as preferable to cutting the benefits of the part-time workers, who make up nearly 50 percent of the staff. The benefit plan is also flexible: staff can opt for child care for more than one child, or for a yearly bonus, for example, if they already receive health coverage from another source. The average annual cost of these staff benefits is $4,675.00.

Childspace's commitment to joint ownership does not negate their desire to reward staff's educational background and experience. Yet Childspace founders recognized that low-income job applicants who show promise may lack the educational background to meet requirements for advancement. Childspace directors and head teachers work with entry-level staff to train them on the job as well as to encourage them to gain units in early childhood education. Assistants with extensive experience who demonstrate sufficient skills and understanding of children's development, and who are committed to earning units in early childhood education, may be promoted to head teacher positions without having achieved a degree.

Childspace's ability to finance better benefits and working conditions is a result, in part, of its economically diverse parent base. Full-fee-paying parents who appreciate the quality of the care their children receive partially subsidize the cost of lower-income families. Several low-interest loans from investors also provided the program with start-up capital. As the program has grown through enrolling more children and establishing a second site, some economies of scale in bookkeeping, administration, commercial contracts and benefits have allowed the centers to operate more efficiently.

Currently a Childspace team is seeking to replicate the Childspace worker cooperative model in other centers around the U.S. Their hope is that in establishing a network of worker cooperatives and resources for these organizations, the gains that have been made at the Philadelphia centers can extend into other communities.

[6] Average hourly wages by position at Childspace were as follows in 1995: director, $12.87, head teacher, $8.75, assistant teacher, $6.74, and aide, $5.37.

Common Obstacles
to Creating Decent-Paying Child Care Jobs

In addition to the rising pressures against decent child care employment and services, as states institute immediate, mandatory work requirements under welfare reform, our survey identified a variety of common barriers faced by programs seeking to develop good child care jobs in low-income communities. Many are policy obstacles that are present in the society as a whole, while others are programmatic obstacles that particular initiatives have confronted and sometimes been unable to resolve.

First, among broader social barriers, the persistence of a low U.S. minimum wage clearly keeps child care wages depressed. With an estimated one-third of caregivers working as minimum wage earners (Whitebook et al., 1993), the forthcoming increase in the minimum wage to $5.15 per hour will result in an immediate, badly-needed boost for the profession as a whole. Even this increase, however, is not likely to hold much ground against concurrent increases in the cost of living; it has been estimated that to match the buying power of the $2.00 minimum wage of the mid-1970s, the minimum would have to be well over $6.00 per hour. Limits to parents' ability to pay more for child care also keep fees, and wages, depressed at levels that are incommensurate with the actual cost of providing quality care (Willer, 1990).

Low earnings are further compounded by a general lack of health care benefits for teachers and providers, especially for part-time workers. Ironically, child care assistance is also in short supply. Not only is there a shortage of subsidized child care services for job program participants who are pursuing child care training or higher education, but many teachers and providers already in the field find it unaffordable to purchase the care that their programs offer to other families.

An historical resistance to consistent national program standards or regulations remains a severe barrier in the entire child care field. In states where licensing requirements are minimal or absent, better-paying child care jobs are much harder to find, since the market tends to favor unregulated care. The inevitable result is wide variability among the states -- and rising pressures to chip away at the relatively minimal standards on adult/child ratios, group size and training that do exist. As states increasingly promote unregulated forms of child care under welfare reform, the importance of sound training and education for teachers and providers is becoming more undervalued than ever.

The states' commitment to child care quality vary greatly -- often depending on the department of state government which administers subsidized child care. This commitment can be especially volatile if it is tied too closely to certain elected officials' presence in office. Further, state and federal payment guidelines for subsidized child care often act as a barrier to program quality and decent compensation -- with reimbursement rates set at 75 percent of the market rate, for example, or parent fees set at a percentage of the cost of care, rather than based on parents' ability to pay. A heavy or exclusive reliance on voucher payment systems, in particular, can easily prevent child care centers from being able to predict enrollments and income, which in turn tends to keep wages depressed.

Among programmatic barriers, some child care job initiatives have suffered from too narrow a focus on the business aspects of managing a child care service, to the exclusion of child development training and other considerations of program quality. Others have run straight into the tough economic realities of a highly undercapitalized profession. In two northeastern states, child care loan funds set up by capital investment programs went largely unused because center directors and family child care providers were loath to take out loans they couldn't foresee being able to repay. Some initiatives have lacked a commitment to helping trainees reach self-sufficiency, focusing too narrowly on job placement with little regard for the earning potential of those jobs. Others have foundered because of dependence on a single, usually public, funding source.

Standards for Success for Effective Training and Employment in Child Care Jobs

Conversely, our survey identified a number of common reasons why certain child care job programs have become highly successful. Efforts to increase access to high-paying child care jobs in low-income communities are most likely to succeed when there is:

- a diversity of funding sources;
- a willingness to invest in sound training and education in child care and child development;
- a clear linkage between training and compensation;
- an established career path whereby training and education can allow participants to earn credentials or degrees; and
- a strong regulatory environment, at the state and/or community level, that supports the development and maintenance of high-quality child care programs.

As welfare reform proposals increasingly focus on cost-cutting measures and deregulation in child care, it becomes increasingly necessary for the child care field to articulate sound principles for training and employment.

We have come to believe that the following principles should guide any program to invest in child care jobs in low-income communities, and particularly, to employ welfare recipients as child care providers:[7]

1. *Those who enter the field must choose to do so, and must be able to demonstrate an aptitude for the work.* Anyone entering child care work as part of welfare reform must be helped to develop realistic expectations for the future as a child care professional. Each trainee should:

- receive an orientation to the work that inspires a commitment to quality -- not just the simple transmission of low-level information.
- participate in assessing his/her own appropriateness for working with groups of children and their families.
- be informed that while many advocates are working to improve conditions in the field, most child care jobs still offer limited earnings, few benefits, and minimal opportunities for advancement.

2. *Training programs must address the requirements of child care work as well as the needs of the trainees.* A number of approaches for training child care professionals are available. Whichever method is followed, training programs for both center-based and home-based child care providers should include:

- content targeted toward improving trainees' basic skills (e.g., literacy and math skills, and/or preparation for the GED).
- specific content related to the care and education of young children (including child development, early childhood curriculum and methods, working with parents, and working with other adults in a group child care setting).
- specific content appropriate for the developmental needs of the children served (infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children, and/or children with special needs), and for the type of setting (center-based or family child care).
- information, particularly for family child care trainees, on licensing requirements, accessing subsidies, and small business management skills.
- diverse training methods to meet the needs of a multicultural and multilingual population, and taught by experienced adult educators.
- a substantial practicum experience in an apprentice role, under qualified supervision.

3. *Child care training must position new providers for career mobility in the field.* Child care training under welfare reform must be of sufficient quality to:

- be integrated into existing training systems in local areas, including Head Start and CDA training.
- award a viable credential, certificate or college credit that can be applied to further job advancement or college-level study.
- provide economic rewards through differential pay scales linked to levels of training completed.
- provide continued access to training after initial employment, in order to help caregivers qualify for roles of increased responsibility and increased compensation in the future.

It will be essential to ensure that welfare reform does not foster a two-tiered child care work force in which former welfare recipients are stuck in the lowest-paying, most dead-end jobs because they are unqualified for higher-paying ones.

4. *Child care providers trained under welfare reform need continued support in order to succeed.* This support should include:

- ongoing mentoring by experienced child care providers, or other formal peer support and assistance, once trainees are employed in child care settings.
- financial and technical assistance to family child care providers to upgrade their homes in order to meet licensing and other requirements.
- comprehensive health coverage.
- assistance with child care costs for their own children.

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[7] The articulation of these guidelines, first issued by NCECW in 1994, benefited greatly from the contributions of the following individuals: Ann Collins, Andrea Genser, Patty Hnatiuk, Beverly Jackson, Sharon Lynn Kagan, Gwen Morgan, Edna Rabick, Carol Stevenson, Erica Tollet and Chantel Walker.

Conclusion

Prompted by the recognition that what's good for teachers and providers is also good for children, a number of programs nationwide are struggling to make child care jobs into viable careers for low-income women, and at the same time to make significant improvements in the quality of care that children receive. Given how challenging both of these objectives are, combining the two is particularly difficult, given current funding and regulatory trends.

Part of the answer for programs is to build creative collaborations and a diverse funding base, but to make widespread, lasting investments, the child care delivery system will inevitably require additional funding. Recognizing the need to increase and coordinate child care dollars, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Indiana and Washington are notable for having begun to take steps toward developing new statewide financing systems for early childhood education. Their efforts, while diverse, are all based on the assumption that new funding sources are needed to meet the demand for quality child care. As funding decisions shift to the state and local levels, policy makers in these states recognize that they must be prepared both to identify new sources of funding and to make reasoned decisions to ensure access to and quality of services.

Even when policy makers and advocates recognize the need for additional child care funding and coordination, however, it is not a foregone conclusion that investment in decent-paying jobs for child care workers will be a high funding priority. Although there is ample documentation linking child care quality to the compensation received by teachers and providers, many state and local child policy makers have invested heavily in child care training and ignored the need to correspondingly improve compensation, or abandoned all hopes of building quality services in favor of serving more children in low-quality, custodial care. Welfare-to-child-care-work programs too often have ignored the fact that many child care jobs are unsuitable for low-income people who need to find a decent-paying occupation.

It is our hope, therefore, that this report will provide policy makers and advocates with some concrete strategies for investing not only in high-quality child care, but in high-quality child care jobs.

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About the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force

The National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force (NCECW), formerly the Child Care Employee Project, is the nation's leading advocate for upgrading the compensation and training of child care teachers and providers. We are working to create a unified and powerful voice for the child care work force, advocating for fair and decent employment for caregivers and reliable, affordable, high-quality care for families.

Our landmark National Child Care Staffing Study (1989, updated 1993) clearly established the link between the quality of care that young children receive and the level of compensation that child care teachers are paid. NCECW coordinates two major national efforts to promote leadership and career advancement for teachers and providers: the Worthy Wage Campaign and the Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance.

Our organization was founded in 1977 by child care teachers in the San Francisco Bay Area concerned about the low pay and status of their work. We relocated our offices to Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1994. Please call or write us for a complete publication list and for more information about our activities.

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